



Signs in Wheathampstead

WDPS is working to improve the look of our village by improving the signs on our streets and along our lanes.

Back in 2007 WDPS produced the document *Sign Up for a Greater Community* and then proposed that a campaign to improve signs in Wheathampstead should be included in the Village Plan which was launched by the Parish Council in 2009. The heart of the proposal is the idea that local signs should be distinctive, reflect the fact that we are a village, and help encourage a sense of local community.

Background

The position in 2007 was that the signs in Wheathampstead are of a type that could exist anywhere – other villages, towns, even major conurbations. They did nothing to reflect the qualities that make Wheathampstead the historic village that it is.

There was – and is still – no overall approach to how and where signs should be positioned. The result is often a higgledy-piggledy jumble of signs. This is not only very ugly but also potentially dangerous as it can leave a motorist confused and unable to distinguish the signs that really are important.

No encouragement is given to local businesses to erect signs (or shop fronts and grilles) that reflect their presence in Wheathampstead. Shops, pubs and other local businesses are free however to erect temporary signs, including oversized “To Let” signs, without regard to the visual impact on the village as a whole. Commercial sponsors are allowed to erect signs on roundabouts that add to the welter of signs yet provide little benefit to the community.

It was very clear from the Village Plan survey which the Parish Council undertook last year that many residents share our views about appropriate signage in the village, and we were pleased when the Parish Council invited WDPS to take the lead in devising the action plans that relate to signage in the Village Plan.



Clutter of signs at Station Road Roundabout



Achievements to date

WDPS brought the village's attention to the issue of signage by producing the booklet *Sign Up for a Greater Community* and asking the Parish Council to adopt the principles advocated in the booklet as part of the Village Plan. A copy can be downloaded from the WDPS website

We are very pleased that the Parish Council has erected a number of new signs. Attractive new signs are now in place at the main entrance points to the village, replacing the previous tired and characterless signs. In the centre of Wheathampstead a handsome finger-post sign points the way to several important village landmarks.

The Parish Council is also commissioning a main Wheathampstead sign that will be sited in the village centre.

What is happening now?

There is much more to be done. WDPS is drawing up a Design Statement for signage in Wheathampstead. The intention is to provide guidance on the kind of signs that will protect and enhance the character of the village and at the same time will be fully functional. The Statement will not replace the apparatus for obtaining planning permission. Instead it will seek to advise and influence, and to provide a set of reasonable guidelines that people will want to adhere to for the benefit of the community.

At the same time a project has been set up to identify redundant and duplicate signs in the village. Working with Herts County Council, we shall be recommending which signs should be removed and which should be replaced or combined with other signs.

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<http://www.wheathampsteadpreservation.org.uk/id6.html>